

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

SAM-01 SA*-01 IO-14 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

DRC-01 /100 W

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O R 141730Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1315

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 1293

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV

SUBJ: GOC TREATY RIGHTS IN PANAMA CANAL

REF: BOGOTA 1292

1. AS FONMIN AND I WERE CONCLUDING OUR DISCUSSION ON THE MEXICO CITY CONFERENCE REPORTED REFTTEL, HE BROUGHT UP THE SUBJ OF THE COLOMBIAN-US TREATY AND ASKED IF HE COULD EXPECT A REPLY TO HIS NOTE OF LAST WEEK. HE WENT OVER THE SAME GROUND WHICH I HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, REITERATED HIS DESIRE TO BE REASONABLE ON THIS SUBJECT, POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD BASICALLY SUPPORTED THE PANAMA POSITION BUT ASSERTED THAT HE COULD NOT ALLOW COLOMBIA'S RIGHTS TO DISAPPEAR BY DEFAULT. HE ADDED THAT THE US SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT WITH COLOMBIA THERE WAS A PROBLEM OF PRESTIGE AND PRIDE WHICH COULD BE TAKEN CARE OF IF PROPER PROCEDURES WERE FOLLOWED.

2. AS A RESULT OF A TIMELY TELEPHONE CALL FROM MAISTO, I WAS ABLE TO RESPOND THAT A REPLY WOULD BE FORTHCOMING WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THE FONMIN EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE RESPONSE MIGHT ARRIVE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR MEXICO CITY. THIS, HE EXPLAINED, WOULD ALLOW HIM TO CONCENTRATE EXCLUSIVELY ON
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CONFERENCE MATTERS AND NOT INTRUDE BILATERAL MATTERS INTO THE

DELIBERATIONS.

3. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION IN WHICH I POINTED OUT THAT IN MY PERSONAL VIEW WE WERE NOT THAT CLOSE TO A TREATY SIGNING WITH PANAMA THAT THE FONMIN HAD TO WORRY ABOUT THIS PROBLEM IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. I SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING A PROMISE FROM HIM THAT, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE RESPONSE TO HIS NOTE ARRIVED IN TIME OR NOT, HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS THE 1914 TREATY AT MEXICO CITY. TRUE TO HIS WORD, THE FONMIN ANNOUNCED ON TV THAT SAME EVENING THAT THERE WERE TOO MANY OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS TO OCCUPY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS AT MEXICO CITY AND HE WOULD NOT BRING THE MATTER OF THE 1914 TREATY TO THE CONFERENCE.

4. COMMENT: VAZQUEZ HAS APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS LEFT TO SERVE AS FONMIN. HE WILL LEAVE OFFICE AS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FONMINS WHICH COLOMBIA HAS HAD IN RECENT HISTORY. GIVEN THIS REPUTATION PLUS HIS GENERALLY FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE US, WE CAN, I THINK, COUNT ON ACHIEVING A GRACEFUL SURRENDER OF COLOMBIA'S RIGHTS OVER THE 1914 TREATY. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE, HOWEVER, THAT HIS SUCCESSOR WILL BE SO INCLINED AND UNLESS WE CAN DISPOSE OF THIS PROBLEM PRIOR TO VAZQUEZ' DEPARTURE FROM OFFICE, THERE EXISTS THE DEFINITE POSSIBILITY OF THIS MINOR ISSUE ESCALATING INTO AN IMPORTANT BILATERAL PROBLEM BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE US.
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